

LAND SIMULATION ACTIVITY

This activity offers groups an opportunity for reflection on the history of the land they inhabit by simulating the impact colonisation has on culture and existence.

YOU WILL NEED:

1. A sheet of paper (A3 size) for each participant. You can print off a map of your local area that only shows key aspects of the natural landscape, or have it blank.
2. Coloured markers
3. The map of Australia showing Aboriginal tribal groups (optional).

PART 1



Facilitator to say:

You are a member of an Aboriginal tribe. (Select your tribe from the map shown if available.)

Draw the outline of your land onto your sheet, taking up most of the space. (Shape does not matter.)

Your clan is responsible for this land and it, in turn, nurtures your life. Beyond this piece of land are places where you must seek permission to travel and where sometimes inter-tribal fighting can occur.

Draw on it the water sources on which you depend. (This can be a river, stream, a spring or soak.)

Draw on it your current camp.

Draw on it the places which you periodically burn to produce fresh “pick” that will attract kangaroo and wallaby and which will produce a crop such as yam daisy with its nutritious tubers.

Draw on it the places where you hunt kangaroo, and wallaby, catch fish, or gather shell-fish.

Draw on it the places where you gather lizards, grubs, bush honey and the places where you dig for other tubers and gather fruit from trees and bushes.

Draw on it the place where you were born and the place that indicates your totem.

Draw on it the place where your father is buried.

Imagine you are woman who has given birth to a child. Draw on it the place where you gave birth and buried the placenta and the umbilical cord of your child.

Draw on your map two places of spiritual significance to your clan.

Draw the place for secret men’s business and the place for secret women’s business.

Draw the place where you gather with other clans to do business such as trade for shells and spear heads and hooks, or negotiate for movement or do other tribal business.

A new and very different tribe has arrived in your area. Their arrival is signaled by the sound of sheep, the bark of dogs and the whistling of white men on horses. They need water for their sheep. The sheep trample and muddy the water source so it is no longer fit to drink. Draw a line across about 10% of your land that encompasses water.

They need more than water, they need feed for their sheep and eye the fresh “pick” and the field of yam daisy. The sheep love the yam daisy and it is obviously good for them. They have hard hooves which trample it and all the available fresh grass until it is all dead. Draw a line across 30% of your land which encompasses these fields.

The numbers of their sheep increase and they need more land. Draw a line that encompasses 60% of your land.

Facilitator to ask:

What has happened to your land? What has happened to your life? (Discuss loss of water and food sources; loss of spiritual places.)

What choices do you now have? (Discuss malnutrition; temptation to take a few sheep with likely violent reprisals from shepherds, possibility and issues related to getting work on a sheep station, possibility of being driven into territory of neighbouring tribes, with risk of violence.)

PART 2

A further phase of this activity could ask participants to draw on their land a mission station.

Discuss the pros and cons of entering the mission.

PART 3

Reflect on this statement by Michael Dodson in Yunupingu, Our Land is Our Life, 1997, p41:



“To understand our law, our culture and our relationship to the physical and spiritual world, you must begin with the land. Everything about Aboriginal society is inextricably interwoven with, and connected to, the land. Culture is the land, the land and spirituality of Aboriginal people, our cultural beliefs or reason for existence is the land. You take that away and you take away our reason for existence. We have grown the land up. We are dancing, singing and painting for the land. We are celebrating the land. Removed from our lands, we are literally removed from ourselves.